

15 STYLES OF COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

1. **BEING RIGHT** – You are continually on trial to prove that your opinions and actions are correct. Being wrong is unthinkable and you will go to any length to demonstrate your rightness.
2. **BLAMING** – You hold other people responsible for your pain, or take the other tack and blame yourself for every problem.
3. **CATASTROPHIZING** – You expect disaster. You notice or hear about a problem and start “what if”s”. What if tragedy strikes? What if it happens to you?
4. **CONTROL FALLACIES (FALSE IDEAS)** – If you feel externally controlled, you see yourself as helpless, a victim of fate. The fallacy of internal control has you responsible for the pain and/or happiness of everyone around you.
5. **EMOTIONAL REASONING** – You believe that what you *feel* must be true – automatically. If you *feel* stupid and boring, then you must *be* stupid and boring.
6. **FALLACY (FALSE IDEA) OF CHANGE** – You expect that other people will change to suit you if you just pressure or cajole them enough. You need to change people because your hopes for happiness seem to depend entirely on them.
7. **FALLACY (FALSE IDEA) OF FAIRNESS** – You feel resentful because you think you know what’s fair, but other people won’t agree with you.
8. **FILTERING** – You take the negative details and magnify them while filtering out all positive aspects of a situation.
9. **GLOBAL LABELING** – You generalize one or two qualities into a negative global judgment.
10. **HEAVEN’S REWARD FALLACY (FALSE IDEA)** – You expect all your sacrifice and self-denial to pay-off, as if there were someone keeping score. You feel bitter when the reward doesn’t come.
11. **MIND READING** – Without their saying so. You know what people are feeling and why they act the way they do. In particular, you are able to define how people are feeling toward you.
12. **OVERGENERALIZATION** – You come to a general conclusion based on a single incident or piece of evidence. If something bad happens once, you expect it to happen over and over again.

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13. **PERSONALIZATION** – Thinking that everything people do or say is some kind of reaction to you. You also compare yourself to others, trying to determine who's smarter, better looking, etc.
14. **POLARIZED THINKING (All-Or-Nothing Thinking)** – things are black and white, good or bad. You have to be perfect or you're a failure. There is no middle ground.
15. **SHOULD**S – You have a list of ironclad rules about how you and other people should act. People who break the rules anger you, and you feel guilty if you violate the rules.

Adapted From *Thoughts and Feelings* by Matthew McKay, Martha Davis, and Patrick Fanning, New Harbinger Publications, 1981.

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